A Dissertation

on

Inflamed and Indolent Ulcers

Experientia justificat remedium
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John Cutler

admitted March 30. 1819

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The principal object to which our exertions should be directed, has been pointed out by the great Lord Verulam, and comprised under the head of usefulness - the correctness of the axiom, has been corroborated, by the collective testimony of wise men at all periods of the world - to advance arguments in support, or to adduce evidence in favor, would be superfluous and unnecessary - if man can fulfill the duties, which he owes to his fellow creatures, or can in any degree approximate to the Deity, it is by devoting his talents, his time, and his industry to the alleviation of the miseries, to which flesh is heir

Unillumed by the benignant rays of paternal love and charity, which the genius of christianity has shed over our souls, the sages of antiquity mourned the fate, and sympathised with the misfortunes, of suffering humanity - instructed by the seldom erring dictates of instinct and intellect, they were conscious that power was given to them, over the various kingdoms of nature, and that a divine providence had not afflicted man, without affording the means of remedying his afflictions - interesting as it would

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he, to revert to the primeval state of our profession, so would it be equally foreign to our present purpose. it is the province of the historian to record the success or the failure of their attempts - to inscribe on the tablet of time the progress of improvement, and likewise to exhibit that most important era of philosophy, when science shook off the shackles which enslaved her, and disenthralled from the trammels of Hypothesis, stood forth in the sacred, and simple majesty of truth.

Since that memorable period, when Lord Bacon, revolutionized the moral world, Medicine and her handmaid Surgery, have maintained a conspicuous ascendancy, and have preserved uninterupted harmony in their connexion with the Sciences - since theory has been deduced from observation and well established facts, how much has been our Science improved, how clearly have the inductive doctrines enabled us to understand the Phenomena of health and disease - to deduce certain and fixed principles, from acknowledged and undeniable data, and in the full tide of successful experiment, to look back with mingled emotions of astonishment and pity, on the fleeting absurdities of unfounded speculation - in fine the pratical nature and utility of

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our profession, alone place us on such high and towering emin-
-ences, and permit us without the imputation of presumption, of
assuming the foremost places in the rank of Philanthropy. These
various considerations, and a well founded conviction, of the impor-
-tance, of our profession to society - of the arduous duties, impera-
-tive, on every member of it to perform, should excite in us, an
ambition to excell, as beneficial in its consequences to man-
-kind in general, as it would be honorable to ourselves in parti-
-cular.

Persuaded that nothing of a very practical
description will be expected, from an inexperienced candidate,
yet sensible of the extreme difficulty, of writing with any regard
to the subject, unless that it be purely practical, and having se-
-lected one, which has been so often, and so ably handled, that
I have good reason to dread, the punishment of my temerity, in
the disapprobation of the attempt. I feel however an higher
degree of confidence, in the pursuit of the present object, than I
could summon, perhaps on any other occasion. The experience
I have had, the observation I have made, and the train of rea-
soning I have been led into, have fully confirmed me in the

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opinion, that induction from sober experiment, is the only road to truth.

In the following pages it will be seen, that I have taken but a cursory view of the subject, confining myself almost exclusively, to the narrow sphere of my own observation, entering on the enquiry, under the strongest conviction, of the lucid, and Philosophical principles of the late Mr John Hunter, I have refrained altogether, from offering any thing, concerning the Pathology of Ulcers - bending all the powers of my will, in submission to this illustrious Physiologist and glowing, with admiration of his talents, I have undeviatingly pursued his precepts, which like the commandments of the Mosaic Law, should be inscribed on tables of Stone - to appreciate the immense value and importance, of this great mans services, we have but to revert to the state of Surgery, and even Medicine, in Great Britain, prior to his time, and contrast its present improved condition, with its former situation - we have but to turn our eyes, to the state of Surgery in France, and over the entire continent of Europe, where we may behold in the unfortunate inmates of their hospitals, numerous examples of the wretched Pathology

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of their reason, the unhappy consequences of prejudice, and irrational scepticism, but from this disgusting prospect, let us rest our eyes on this happy country, the glorious birth-place of science, the great protector, and the hospitable asylum of the oppressed, that has not been terrified by the unknown, or unprecedented in its example, this region, I mean, I can be called, without vanity, a fair sphere, at the access of humanity, preserve the blessings, the rights of observation, to the sole mighty, an important hypothesis, as they are, [illegible] unknown, [illegible] of wonder, that we have [illegible] remain unimpaired, and let the magnificent [illegible] be [illegible] transgressions, and be revered in time.

A variety of considerations have induced me, to assert the hearty and firmness and invariable liberty, as the [illegible] of [illegible] during a residence of [illegible] years, the long character of this, as the [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] executed, in the great [illegible] liberty, above all other considerations, or prosecuting any [illegible], I should that they [illegible] [illegible] entry, the [illegible] complaint [illegible] [illegible] in the [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible],

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I was very soon impressed with the belief, that some systematic plan of treatment persevered in, might be attended with beneficial consequences, engrossed with this opinion, I resorted to every expedient, that I conceived would, in any degree contribute to the desired end. It is unnecessary to enumerate the many disappointments, I met with and the difficulties I encountered, would only tend to delay this publication, without yielding any valuable conclusion, I shall therefore proceed, to detail the plan of treatment, made use of, and continued, to the cure of the inflammed, and indolent forms of Ulcer.

The Ulcers of the prisoners in the Union House, and Workhouse, must uniformly present inflamed appearances and the usual cauterized, for as the signal irritation, of the patient 2 or 3 days, however these symptoms subside, the ulcers have to be treated as atonic, and powerfully stimulated as a chronic condition. This rapid alteration, can easily be accounted for, on considering that the irritating influence, and the more sources of irritation, have been withdrawn.

Observation, and some experience, have satisfied me of the practical importance, of considering every doubtful

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'rum st ulcer, or inflamed - when the ulcer maintains its inflammatory diathesis, the primary object, ought always be to reduce the inflammation, but in the selection of the means, considerable caution is to be exercised - the constitution of the patient - his habits and idiosyncrasies, are to be carefully scrutinized - bleeding although the most effectual mode, of allaying inflammation, under ordinary circumstances, will often prove of little avail in this particular form of disease, and will very frequently, prove injurious, and even injurious consequences - however the inflammatory action, must be overcome, and although the disease is local in its situation, yet as the effects become general, general measures, must be resorted to - at the head of these, we may place, active purging, - strict adherence to our regimen, it may be objected to purging, that the constitution used, counteracts the good devices, but to this plausible source of its efficacy, we can answer, that every anticipated bad consequence, may be obviated, by keeping the patient, on Sir James Eustace's, simplified and improved, by Doctor Ryke - purging at all events must be put in operation, for next to position, which I shall hereafter notice, it constitutes the most successful treatment, it does not appear to me, there is any thing peculiar,

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in one purgative more than another, I have [illegible] the saline cathartics, occasionally combined with some of the Anti-[illegible] preparations.

Men in Europe have been much surprised, at the difficulty of overcoming diseased action in [illegible] Gremities, notwithstanding very active measures were put into operation, & have known it a source of astonishment, and considerable vexation, to many eminent surgeons, to be baffled in their attempts, & many cases, contrary to their expectations, ending the cure, was to my cases impossible, but [illegible] and subsequent experience have convinced me that the greatest [illegible] secret, consists in the proper position of the limb, they have been in the habit, the patient [illegible] ordinary [illegible] upon, the elevation of an inflamed limb will be inclined to impeach my sincerity, and question the correctness of my assertion, I [illegible] this last [illegible] one of the most important improvements, the practice of Medicine has received in modern times, not merely in consideration of its great importance in the cure of venereal poison, its extension to all inflammatory affections of the extremities. I consider it expedient to emphatically insist

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on the immense, nay indispensable, importance of rest and position. I am thus particular, because modern Surgeons treat very lightly of its efficacy, much as we are indebted to Mr. Bigelow. We have many as much reason to deplore the sanction and support which he has given to the erroneous and unnatural doctrine of motion and exercise, as bewailing the cure of Wheels, a case now lies before me, so much in point that I shall beg leave to transcribe it.

On the morning of the 3rd of August 1812, I was requested to visit a man in Shippen-st. who had strained both his ankles, attempting to run down stairs. On my arrival I found him extended on a bed, incapable of standing upright, his feet were very much swollen, with considerable ecchymosis of the ankles, it occurred to me that a fair opportunity presented of more fully satisfying myself, with regard to position, and I resolved to institute a comparison, I placed one of his legs in an horizontal posture, and elevated the other by pillows, to about an angle of 35 or 40 degrees, and applied to both ankles a solution of Muriate of Ammonia and Vinegar in water, on visiting him the next day, and

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examining the state of the ankle, I found the ecchymosis had increased considerably and that the pain on the most trifling motion, was represented as excruciating. I ordered him some pure tincture Modicine and repeated my visit on the 8th. I was happy to perceive that the swelling had considerably subsided, that the heat and pain, were but little complained of, and that he could move the elevated joint, with more ease. The other ancle, appeared to have continued, nearly in status quo the swelling however had diminished a little and the pain was not so great as at first, nevertheless its improvement bore no proportion, to the one which had been elevated, at conceiving it justifiable, to protract the cure for a more strict illustration of the principle, I had the feet of the bed elevated, and the limbs of the patient placed, parallel to each other, in a few days the tension, and other symptoms disappeared and restored the patient, to his usual avocations, I have cited this case, because it [illegible] for comparison it could not [illegible] facts equally strong in confirmation of the principle, I am therefore [illegible] in any, or all, the proposed, plans of treatment, it will, however

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necessary, to preserve the surface of the Ulcer moist, which may be effected, by laying on it a very light poultice consisting of any farinaceous substance, when these various remedies fail, I have seen the most happy effects derived from the application of a blister to the sound skin, three or four inches distant from the Ulcer, I recommend this however, only when inflammation has been considerably reduced, and when the ulcer is very sordid free, but I recommend it in these cases, with the greatest confidence, in its salutary effects these "Modus Operandi" I think must be ascribed, to the powerful agency of counter irritation, it is however very immaterial, in what manner it operates it is sufficient to know that it does good, I shall dwell no longer, on this, and of any subject sensible that I have added nothing to the promotion of the art, but satisfied with having borne testimony to the improvements of others.

The next most prevalent and by far the most obstinate form of Ulcer, is that very, properly denominated the indolent Ulcer, this species of Ulcer is rarely the course of the former, it being necessary in this instance, to excite action, and as Mr Hunt expresses it, not sensibly to effect

a cure, but to render that cure as permanent as possible, a variety of conditions have been proposed to effect this object, the greater part of them Empirical in their essence, and some by experience are thought inexplicable in their operation, we must however except Doctor Physick's treatment, by removing the callous edges, and the surface of the ulcer generally, the theory is simple, beautiful and extremely practical, the morbid deposition of the part is destroyed and a healthy one frequently, and that action substituted, in this manner I have seen ulcers which have resisted all other treatment, yield in a very short space to the action of the caustic, Mr Brunton's system whether it acts by keeping the granulations in contact or by exciting a tonic impression on the part, is a powerful auxiliary in the cure of indolent ulcers as I before remarked Mr. Brunton has committed a most egregious error, in permitting his patients to exercise, he in fact counteracts the ostensible object, for which he applies his splints. Every motion of the limb, tearing asunder the new formed granulations, and becoming a fresh source of irritation, his untoward zeal, in the ulcer induction of his practice appears to arise from his mistaken judgement.

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I now proceed to speak of the use of Oxymuriate of Potash, or Chlorate of Lime in the true spirit of Empiricism. I entered upon a variety of experiments in attempting to cure Ulcers on the legs of old men, in the Surgical wards of the Alms House about the middle of the Summer of 18[illegible]. I was engaged in trying other remedies on Cancer, as applied to branching, and it being then as it remains at present, a subject of warm controversy in Chemical circles, I was desirous of discovering its, if possible, it occurred to me at the time, that some benefit might be derived, from its application in the form of Poultice, to old Ulcers, with Doctor Mercoir's permission, he being Surgeon in attendance at the time. I selected four of the most indolent and obstinate cases, and commenced their treatment, by removing the indurated edges of caustic, and by applying the Solution in oat cake, poultices, with Indian meal, as I have by me notes of the cases, I take the liberty of copying two of them.

Nathan Roberts aged 64 years, tall stature, spare habit, had an Ulcer on his leg of about eight inches circumference, occupying the anterior and

and was found of the very worst description, it proceeded from an injury received in the year 1815, from an old, third rolling against it, he had been chartered in the Navy, and it was considered one of the most troublesome cases which had occurred, it had no immediately specific character, one time being very indolent, at another, highly irritable, sometimes sloughing, that nothing, in conjunction with the use of lime, Bark, opium, &c. &c. the usual means were resorted to, & myself paid very particular attention, applying the poultices and bandaged the limb, twice in the hundred days, no doubt but these circumstances considerably retarded the cure, I found it useful occasionally to vary the application, and alternate it, with very minute quantities of Sulphate of Copper, Caustic &c. over the ulcerated surface, and a due attention to the state of the digestive, the ulcer healed, and he was discharged cured, five weeks from the commencement of the treatment.

Samuel Blane aged fifty, five years, full habit, was attacked by the yellow fever, in the year 1803, of which disease he recovered, but it approached

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that something like a metastasis of the disorder had taken place, for on the subsidence of the febrile symptoms, his legs were covered with ulcers which have never been perfectly healed since, but have presented a dull, cold indolent, [illegible] character, occasionally however taking on inflammatory action, this however must be attributed to the intemperate habits of the patient, on the tenth of August 1[illegible] I undertook the charge of him, and pursued the [illegible] before detailed, except [illegible] [illegible] for that, as above, two [illegible] in the thigh and at the ankles, the progress of the cure was very rapid, cicatrization was nearly completed, when he was seized with typhus fever, prevalent in the house at the time, which [illegible] him to his former condition, [illegible] with the remedies considered but auxiliary in the cure of [illegible] however well, [illegible] with [illegible] ignorance, and the immediate use of superficial chemical [illegible] in such cases always [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

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of the fluids & various secretions, would have frequently attached, rather in imposition on the multitude, & initiated a series of experiments, to ascertain the properties of the various hitherto deemed fluids, occasioned an inquisitive nature, & prevented me of the opportunities of hereafter their analysis, but as I was a process I had fill'd in to be satisfied with the results of the chemistry at all events. I am not disposed to attribute the efficacy, or the modus operandi, of the Oxymuriate of Lime, solely to chemical principles, but I have no doubt that in addition to its being a very, secular stimulus, exciting action in the general, that it does, from its chemical action on the animal fluids, decomposing them, and rendering them innocuous. I am borne out in this conclusion by the direct experiments of Doctor Bostock.

The Medical World has been justly disgusted, by the arrogant pretensions of chemical enthusiasts, who have considered the animated system, as a mere arrangement of inorganic matter, and as bodies mutilating defunctive. I, under this opinion have often converted a living body into a Caput Mortuum but on the other hand

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which I have sedulously avoided, in the introduction of this remedy I claim little credit, it was the result of experiment unconnected with any previous theory, but at the moment I forego my claims, I may be permitted to award the meed, of my most elevated admiration, and sincere reverence, of the Talents, and judgement, of that Gentleman, who has brought Surgery to a state of excellence in the United States, not surpassed in the World, I trust that through life, I shall bear grateful testimony, of the many advantage myself, and mankind in general, have derived from the efforts, Example, and instruction, of such distinguished, and modest worth.

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